



### IN THIS ISSUE

2025 Capitol Experience.....	1
Sponsor Spotlight: Kentucky Farm Bureau.....	1
Beyond Ready.....	2
Alumni Thriving.....	2
Ag Mini Grants.....	3
Welcome to the Team.....	3
2025 Emerald Gala.....	4
Honorary Emerald Award.....	5
Sponsor Spotlight: Kissel Entertainment.....	5
Message from the State President.....	6
Friends & Alumni Mixer .....	6
Fashion Leadership Board.....	7
2025-26 State Officers.....	8-9
Leaving a Legacy-Joe Kurth....	10
4-H Teen Summit.....	11
Ice Cream Social.....	11
Upcoming Events.....	12



## 2025 CAPITOL EXPERIENCE

This past February, youth from across the Commonwealth had the incredible opportunity to experience Capitol Hill through Kentucky 4-H Capitol Experience. This two-day event brought together over 500 4-Hers who painted the Capitol green in matching polos as they explored civic engagement, leadership, and the legislative process.

The first evening included a dinner and prep session, giving 120 youth time to reflect on their 4-H stories, prepare discussion topics, and build confidence for their upcoming meetings with legislators.

They also heard from Anne Marie

Franklin from Kentucky Farm Bureau and learned about the organization's important role in shaping state policy.

The second day began with powerful remarks from Kentucky's First Lady, Britany Beshear, and Kyle Kelly from Kentucky Farm Bureau, in the Capitol Rotunda, inspiring youth as they prepared to meet with lawmakers.

Throughout the day, 4-Hers sat in on a House Agriculture Committee meeting, explored the Capitol, and met with their representatives. A Harrison County 4-Her, Delaney Koch, had the opportunity to speak during the committee meeting, sharing how 4-H has impacted her life.



## Sponsor Spotlight: Kentucky Farm Bureau

We're incredibly grateful to Kentucky Farm Bureau for their generous sponsorship of Capitol Experience! Thanks to their support, over 500 Kentucky 4-Hers had the unforgettable opportunity to visit our state Capitol. Proudly wearing 4-H green polos, these young leaders made a strong, united impression—truly painting the Capitol green while learning about state government and gaining valuable insight into civic engagement.



## Upcoming Events

- June 10th-13th: Teen Conference
- June 11th: Friends & Alumni Mixer
- August 14th-24th: Kentucky State Fair
- August 14th: Ice Cream Social
- August 15th: Donor Appreciation Breakfast
- October 5th-11th: National 4-H Week



## Beyond Ready



### Beyond Ready Signing Day

An exciting milestone for Kentucky 4-H, as 61 students took part in the inaugural Kentucky 4-H Beyond Ready Signing Day, a collaborative initiative between Wayne County 4-H and Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG). This event celebrated the accomplishments and future plans of high school seniors as they prepare to step confidently into college, careers, the trades, and military service.

The impact of the program was evident in survey feedback from participants. A remarkable 96% of unemployed students reported feeling equipped with the skills they need to succeed. Among students who are currently employed, every single one shared that the Mock Interview program was an invaluable experience. Impressively, 28% of those working students have already received promotions or raises since their participation. Overall, 98% of all participants said they now feel more confident applying for jobs—a clear sign that the program is preparing students for real-world success.

As these seniors look ahead, many are headed to college, with plans to attend the University of Kentucky, University of the Cumberlands, Eastern Kentucky University, and Somerset Community College. Others are entering the workforce directly, combining employment with further education, or even launching their own businesses. A number of students are also pursuing skilled trades, such as HVAC and electrical training through Somerset Community College. Several students have chosen to serve their country by joining the military, with commitments to the Navy, basic training programs, and the National Guard.

The Kentucky 4-H Beyond Ready Signing Day was more than just a celebration—it was a powerful reminder of the potential within every student when given the right tools, support, and encouragement. Congratulations to all the seniors on their achievements and their bright futures ahead. Your 4-H community is proud of you, and you are truly beyond ready.



### Alumni Thriving- Cassidy May



Cassidy May turned her passion for creating and the joy flowers bring into her dream job: a wedding and event florist. She founded The Wild Rose in 2022 and expanded her team in 2023. They are committed to providing quality florals for all types of celebrations.

She grew up in Jessamine County, and attributes most of her life skills to her time spent with 4-H, and Cathy Weaver in particular. Her early days of 4-H participation began with speech and demonstration competitions, the first of many activities that pulled her from her comfort zone. She attended 4-H camp, continuing to return as an adult volunteer, and was active in the Jessamine County 4-H Teen Council. She went on to partake in the District 4-H Teen Council, helping to plan and execute the 2016 retreat, and was a member of the Kentucky 4-H Performing Arts Troupe. Starting her 4-H career as a shy middle schooler who tried her best to blend in, she ended it as a confident 18-year-old who was ready to take on the world.

As leader of The Wild Rose, she heads up an average of 45 events per year, empowers her team to step up when needed, and prioritizes using Kentucky-grown flowers in her designs when possible. The designs you see from her today consist of 100% Kentucky-grown products from flower farms across the state, purchased from The Kentucky Flower Market.

## 4-H Teen Summit

### Beyond the Summit

The 4-H Summit is a transformative experience for middle school youth, offering opportunities to grow, connect, and learn. This year, 115 youth, 33 Teen Leaders, and 43 adults came together for social activities, hands-on learning, and leadership development. This impactful event is made possible by the generous contributions of the Kentucky 4-H Foundation.



At the Summit, participants built social skills and new friendships, with 57% of attendees excited about meeting new people and 51% enjoying time with friends. These interactions help youth grow emotionally and academically, fostering a sense of belonging that supports healthy development.

Hands-on workshops were a major highlight, with 61% of attendees naming them their favorite part. Whether learning leadership skills (which 39% found most valuable) or practical topics like car maintenance, youth gained confidence and critical thinking skills that will serve them well in the future.

The Summit also emphasizes civic engagement. Participants took part in community service projects, like writing encouraging notes to assisted living residents, which helped them feel more connected to their communities.

The success of the Summit is evident from the positive feedback, with many participants eager to continue their 4-H involvement. On average, they were 3.7 times more likely to participate in other 4-H activities as a result of the Summit. This event not only boosts youth development but also inspires a lifelong commitment to leadership and service, preparing them for a bright future.

## Ice Cream Social

### 5th Annual Friends & Alumni Ice Cream Social

Thursday, August 14th

7-9 PM EST

Kentucky State Fair

Harold Workman North Wing | Mezzanine Room 202

Sponsored by



To attend, please RSVP to  
[Jessica.Patterson@uky.edu](mailto:Jessica.Patterson@uky.edu)  
or scan the QR code







## Joseph Kurth, Former Assistant Director of Cooperative Extension for 4-H Youth Development Programs

Joe Kurth, 77, of Lexington, Kentucky, passed away unexpectedly at his home on March 20, 2025. He was born on April 8, 1947, in Savanna, Illinois, to Jay and Kathryn Kurth. Joe met Marianne Hall, the love of his life, during their freshman year of high school, and the two were married in 1966. They shared 55 years of marriage and had two children, Lisa and Russell.

Joe's journey with 4-H began early. He was a dedicated member of the Tip Top Troopers 4-H Club for 10 years. His mother, Kathryn, a 4-H project leader, made sure he completed his record books on time—a habit that reflected his lifelong commitment to follow-through and excellence. Joe earned a B.A. in History from Beloit College in 1969 and later completed his M.Ed. and Ph.D. in

Educational Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Missouri.

In Kentucky, Joe's vision and leadership left a lasting mark. One of his most significant achievements was helping to shape the Kentucky 4-H Foundation into a stronger, more sustainable entity. He led the effort to create the Executive Director position within the Foundation, a move that brought professional leadership to its fundraising and development efforts and ensured long-term support for youth programming across the state. His belief in the importance of private funding and organizational leadership helped transform the Foundation into a dynamic partner in Kentucky's 4-H mission.

During his tenure, Joe developed the Kentucky 4-H Core Curriculum, organizing youth programming around seven major content areas. He successfully advocated for a \$2 million legislative appropriation to enhance and support Kentucky's 4-H camping program, and under his leadership, all four state camping centers achieved American Camp Association (ACA) accreditation. He introduced critical volunteer training programs, including the Livestock and Horse Volunteer Certification systems and their re-certification components. He also reinvented major state-level events such as the 4-H Junior Communications Event, and launched new experiences like "4-H: A Capitol Experience" and the 4-H Summit, giving youth more meaningful ways to engage with civic life and develop leadership skills.

Joe Kurth retired from the University of Kentucky in August 2010, capping off an extraordinary career that spanned more than five decades and touched countless lives. His legacy is one of service, vision, and heart. He was a consensus-builder, a mentor, and a tireless advocate for youth and the adults who support them. His influence extended nationally through his leadership on the National 4-H Name and Emblem Committee and the Board of Directors for the National 4-H Council. In recognition of his contributions, he received the Kentucky 4-H Distinguished Leadership Award in 2012 and was inducted into the National 4-H Hall of Fame in 2015.

## From Seed to Success



The Carroll County 4-H Garden Club blossomed in a big way this past year with help from a Kentucky 4-H Foundation Ag Mini-Grant, which funded a hands-on horticulture project that engaged youth in growing and selling chrysanthemums.

With their "Fall Mum Market" project, members dove into agriculture, business, and marketing—learning to grow mums from seedlings and managing every part of the small enterprise. "It was really cool to go plant the seedlings and then see something so colorful grow from it," said 11-year-old Addison Rose. "The whole process from seedling, to beautiful flower and on to a new happy owner was very rewarding."

Wesley Smith, age 9, added, "I liked watching the mums grow over the summer."

From studying soil conditions and pest control to organizing inventory and customer service at local events, the youth led the way. When a delayed soil delivery threatened their schedule, they quickly sourced an alternative—gaining early insight into supply chain issues.

Social media also played a key role. With adult guidance, members created promotional content and shared weekly updates, helping them sell out their entire crop. "This project opened a door for kids who might not have thought about agriculture as a career or even a hobby," said Garden Club Leader Elizabeth Mefford. "It was more than growing mums—it was about growing minds."

Working with the City of Carrollton, the club provided mums for fall decorations downtown, enhancing community pride. "Growing mums through the 4-H Garden Club was a great experience in agriculture and community partnership," said Garden Club President Brenna Mefford.

Because of the Kentucky 4-H Foundation Ag Mini-Grant, the youth not only grew flowers—they grew confidence, skills, and a sense of possibility. With proceeds from their sales and a new grant in hand, the club is already planning an even bigger project for next year.



## Welcome to the Team

### Kentucky 4-H Foundation would like to welcome a familiar face to the team!

Walter Steely takes on the role of Development Director for the Kentucky 4-H Foundation. He graduated from Murray State University in 2022 with a degree in Agricultural Economics, focusing on Marketing and Management, and recently completed his Master of Science in Agriculture in December. During his time at Murray State, Walter worked in the Office of Development as the Assistant Director of Annual Giving.

His connection to 4-H started at a young age, inspired by his family's deep roots in the organization. He was an active member of the Kentucky 4-H State Teen Council for three years and went on to serve as the 2018–2019 Kentucky 4-H Vice President. In 2019, Walter earned the prestigious Emerald Award in recognition of his leadership and achievements. His love for working with cattle also began as a 4-H project and continues to be a personal passion.



Walter Steely, Development Director



## *Emerald Gala*

The 8th Annual Emerald Gala brought together friends, supporters, and champions of Kentucky 4-H for an unforgettable evening celebrating the power of youth development. The night was filled with meaningful conversations, heartfelt stories, and a shared commitment to creating brighter futures for our 4-H members.

One of the evening's most powerful moments came as the 2024 Emerald Achievement winners took the stage. Each shared how their 4-H experiences have shaped who they are today and inspired their goals for tomorrow. Their stories were a powerful reminder of why we gather in support of this program year after year.

We were also honored to present the Honorary Emerald Award to Dr. Nancy Cox, recognizing her steadfast dedication and unwavering support for 4-H.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors and sponsors we raised over \$70,000 to support youth across the Commonwealth! These funds will help expand access to 4-H opportunities, particularly through the Achievement Program, which encourages youth to build leadership, citizenship, and communication skills across five key areas. With these accomplishments, members travel to Washington D.C. and Atlanta Georgia, they also are awarded scholarships for Leadership conferences at all levels of the Achievement Program.

*Thank you for a wonderful evening!*



**Treasurer, Creighton Smith**

Creighton Smith has been involved in 4-H since his days as a Cloverbud. The program has taken him across the U.S., allowing him to build connections, gain new ideas, and apply what he's learned to his own farming operation. A unique part of his 4-H experience is starting his own herd of Hereford beef cattle, a goal made possible through the skills and knowledge gained in 4-H. His achievements include being part of the First Overall Team in the Kentucky State Livestock Skillathon Contest and placing Eighth Overall Team in the National 4-H Livestock Skillathon Contest. Through 4-H, he has gained valuable experiences that will support his future success in agriculture.



**Reporter, Emme Lynch**

Emme Lynch has grown tremendously through her 4-H journey, starting with local clubs and fair projects and for the past two years a delegate on the State Teen Council. Through 4-H, she has developed strong leadership, communication, and teamwork skills, and has built lasting friendships and a deep passion for the program. As the Education Committee Chair, she led a workshop at this year's Summit and continues to inspire younger members by giving back through roles like Teen Camp Counselor. Her experiences have shaped her into a leader who is dedicated to helping others and creating lasting impact in her community and across the state.

These five outstanding individuals have been slated as the newly elected Kentucky 4-H State Officers and will be officially inducted into their roles this summer during 4-H Teen Conference on the University of Kentucky campus. Over the next year, they will serve as ambassadors and leaders for Kentucky 4-H, representing youth across the state. Their selection followed a rigorous two-day process that included interviews and various leadership experiences. We are confident in their abilities and excited to see the incredible work they will accomplish in the year ahead.





**President, Case Shirrell**

Case Shirrell’s journey with Kentucky 4-H began in the fourth grade when a program assistant sparked his curiosity during a classroom visit. Encouraged by a teacher, he joined the county’s shooting sports program, where he developed leadership skills and formed lasting friendships. His involvement quickly expanded to summer camp, Teen Club, and eventually the State Teen Council. Through 4-H, he gained valuable skills in public speaking, safety, and leadership, while being mentored by inspiring individuals who taught him resilience, compassion, and attention to detail. He credits 4-H with shaping the responsible, confident person he is today.

Harper Ritchey has been an active member of Caldwell County 4-H for seven years, starting as a Cloverbud and later joining as a traditional member at age nine. Involved in projects like Country Ham, Land Judging, Cooking, and Photography, she also participated in clubs and leadership programs such as Teen Council and Teen Leadership Academy. Her favorite project is the Country Ham Project, which she has done for eight years, helping her develop communication skills and a passion for food education. Through 4-H, Harper gained leadership experience, discovered new interests, and grew into a more confident, community-minded individual.



**Vice President, Harper Ritchey**



**Secretary, Bethany Barber**

Bethany Barber’s 4-H journey began in elementary school and has grown into a meaningful experience filled with learning, leadership, and service. Through projects like photography, babysitting, and farm displays, she developed practical skills alongside important life lessons in responsibility, time management, and leadership. Over the years, she has taken on various club officer roles, served as a youth representative on the county council, represented 4-H for the county farm bureau, and participated as an Area Teen Council delegate. Mentoring younger members and contributing to community service has been especially rewarding, strengthening her commitment to giving back and growing as a leader at the county, area, and state levels.

## Honorary Emerald Award Winner

*Dean Nancy Cox*



Dr. Nancy M. Cox, who served as Dean of the UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment from 2014 to 2024, has been a tireless champion for Kentucky 4-H throughout her leadership. A former 4-Her herself from Greenville County, South Carolina, she often credited the program with helping her gain confidence and overcome shyness—especially through public speaking.

Dr. Cox brought that personal connection into her work, consistently advocating for 4-H youth and programs at every level. She shared her 4-H story with young people across the state, inspiring them to see their own leadership potential. Whether celebrating big milestones or navigating challenges, she supported Kentucky 4-H with unwavering belief in its value.

Her support helped elevate 4-H’s visibility at the University of Kentucky, and her leadership opened doors for collaboration, growth, and investment in youth development. One of her proudest moments was seeing UK leaders, including President Eli Capilouto, recognize the professionalism and impact of 4-H youth, especially at events like Teen Conference.

“Dr. Cox knew the transformational power of 4-H,” said Dr. Rachel Guidugli. “Her advocacy shaped where we are today.”

With deep gratitude, we thank Dr. Cox for her years of leadership and her commitment to helping more than 200,000 Kentucky youth each year thrive through 4-H.

## Sponsor Spotlight: Kissel Entertainment

A heartfelt thank-you to Kissel Entertainment, our Emerald Gala Exclusive Emerald Sponsor, whose generosity made this incredible evening possible. Known for bringing joy to communities across the region through family-friendly amusement and events, Kissel Entertainment brings that same spirit of fun and support to everything they do—including investing in the next generation of Kentucky leaders. We’re proud to partner with a company that believes in the mission of 4-H as much as we do!





## Message from 4-H State President



**Kentucky 4-H President,  
Callie Derossett**

The 2024-2025 Kentucky 4-H State Officer team has been busy the past few months and we couldn't be happier about it. Most recently we were given the opportunity to serve on the State Officer Slating Committee and we are so pleased with the next group of leaders that will be champions for 4-H. In early April, Kate Ford, Nora Hanley and I attended the National 4-H Conference in Washington D.C. This was a valuable experience being able to connect with 4-Hers from across our Nation and hear their stories. While this was an exciting opportunity, the timing was unfortunate as the conference was held at the same time as the Kentucky 4-H Emerald Gala, where the State 4-H Vice-President and Emerald recipient, Ty Jones was honored for his achievement.

It is a great time of year to be a Kentucky 4-H member. As we look back at our recent events, there are a few key moments that stick out in my mind such as Capitol Experience when we painted Frankfort with green. And of course, getting to know our State Teen Council members at our meetings. The Kentucky 4-H Summit was the best weekend with the best middle school-aged members. The youth were given the perfect opportunity to dive straight into workshops and the ideas of the 4-H program. This experience allowed us to connect with these youth and hope they stay involved in the organization. In the past 10 months, my team and I have truly bonded, and I could not be more grateful for that and the Kentucky 4-H program that has made a genuine impact on my life.

As we look to the last moments in our year of service, we look forward to spending a week with our closest friends at the 2025 Kentucky 4-H State Teen Conference in June. A week on the University of Kentucky's campus will allow us to make new connections, strengthen our communication skills, and promote civic engagement. My team and I are sad to hang up our green jackets for the last time, but we will forever cherish the moments we spent with you Kentucky 4-H!

## Friends & Alumni Mixer

### Friends & Alumni Mixer at 4-H Teen Conference

**Celebrate where you started and the  
friendships that have lasted at the 4-H  
Friends & Alumni Mixer!**

**Heavy Appetizers  
June 11th, 5:00-6:00 pm  
Great Hall of the UK Student  
Center**

Parking is available in the Limestone Parking Garage  
and walk across the Pedway to Student Center.

Please RSVP by June 5th

RSVP by scanning this QR code or emailing  
Jessica Patterson (jessica.patterson@uky.edu)



**KENTUCKY**  
4-H FOUNDATION

## Fashion Leadership Board

### Threads of Opportunity

As Kentucky 4-H provides enriching, progressive experiences for its members, the Fashion Leadership Committee of the State Teen Council recently embarked on an inspiring career exploration trip designed to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed for the future.

This immersive two-day trip, funded by the Kentucky 4-H Foundation, allowed the committee to explore various sectors in Lexington and on the University of Kentucky campus,



broadening their understanding of career opportunities in the fashion industry. The adventure began at Albert Couture, Kentucky's first and only fashion design house. Here, the 4-H members gained valuable insights into the intricacies of operating within the high-end fashion market. They learned not only about the creative processes involved in fashion design but also about the business strategies that drive success on a global scale, highlighting the profound cultural and economic impact of fashion worldwide.

Following, the group visited Pomegranate, a renowned Kentucky-based textile company that produces exquisite home interior fabrics. This segment of the trip focused on the artistry of textile design, where the committee members discovered how owner, Angela Beck draws inspiration from art to create stunning textiles that resonate with both aesthetic and functional needs. Participants were captivated by the significance of thoughtful design and quality materials in the creation of luxurious home environments.

A career exploration trip wouldn't be complete without a fashion show, and the University of Kentucky Department of Fashion Merchandising and Apparel from the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment rose to the occasion splendidly. Attendees were treated to a showcase of Southern-inspired fashion trends modeled by current students at UK, highlighting the collaborative spirit of local businesses and emerging talent. During the Color Me Kentucky Fashion Show, the Kentucky 4-H Fashion Leadership Committee was recognized for its contributions to the fashion community. Dr. Scarlett Wesley acknowledged the committee's hard work, and the garments created by the youth were beautifully displayed, drawing admiration from many attendees who commented on the innovative designs and the impressive skill level exhibited by the young designers.



## Would you consider supporting Kentucky 4-H?

Scan this code or contact Walter Steely  
email: [walter.steely@uky.edu](mailto:walter.steely@uky.edu)

